

Multilingual Family Engagement Planning Guide

A practical tool for education leaders to build authentic partnerships with multilingual families

Section 1: Know Your Families

Before you can effectively engage multilingual families, you need to understand who they are and what languages they speak.

Language	Number of Families	Current Engagement Level
		■ High ■ Medium ■ Low
		■ High ■ Medium ■ Low
		■ High ■ Medium ■ Low
		■ High ■ Medium ■ Low

Section 2: Match Tools to Situations

Not every situation requires the same approach. Use this guide to select the right communication strategy.

Situation	Recommended Tool	Why It Works
Urgent safety or legal issue	Emergency interpretation hotline (immediate)	Ensures accuracy and immediate response for time-sensitive matters
IEP meeting, special education discussion, or disciplinary conversation	In-person certified interpreter	Builds trust, allows for nuanced discussion, respects the importance of the topic
Parent-teacher conference about academic progress	Phone or video interpreter	Provides professional interpretation while being more flexible than in-person
School event invitation (open house, concert, sports)	Translated flyer + robocall in home language	Low-stakes information can use multiple channels to maximize reach
Weekly newsletter or routine updates	Website translation + key info highlighted	Allows families to access information on their own schedule

Key Principle: Match the urgency and sensitivity of the situation to the formality and accuracy of your communication tool.

Section 3: Avoid These Common Mistakes

■ Don't Do This	✓ Do This Instead
Use Google Translate for complex or sensitive communications	Use professional interpreters for anything beyond basic routine information
Ask bilingual students to interpret for their parents	Protect student privacy and avoid putting children in inappropriate roles
Send only written translated materials without follow-up	Combine written materials with personal outreach (calls, meetings)
Wait until there's a crisis to engage multilingual families	Build relationships proactively through regular, positive communication

Section 4: Your Action Plan

Use this space to plan your immediate next steps. Start small and build momentum.

Action Item	My Plan
One multilingual family I will reach out to this month:	
The language(s) they speak:	
Why I'm reaching out (purpose of contact):	
Communication method I will use:	
Resources I need (interpreters, translation, etc.):	
Date I will make contact:	

How I will measure success:	
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Remember: Effective communication with multilingual families isn't about perfection—it's about demonstrating respect, investing time, and ensuring every family can fully participate in their child's education.